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Pierre Bourdieu and Elites: Making the Hidden Visible¹

Mairi Maclean
University of Bath
kmm57@bath.ac.uk

Charles Harvey
Newcastle University
Charles.Harvey@ncl.ac.uk

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Mairi Maclean is Professor of International Business at the University of Bath, UK. She received her PhD from the University of St Andrews, Scotland. Her research interests include international business elites and elite power from a Bourdieusian perspective, entrepreneurial philanthropy, and historical organisation studies. She is currently working on an ESRC-funded project examining the Rowntree business lectures and the interwar British management movement. Recent publications include contributions to the *Academy of Management Review*, *Organization Studies*, *Human Relations*, *Organizational Research Methods* and the *Business History Review*.

Charles Harvey is Professor of Business History and Management at Newcastle University Business School and Director of the Centre for Research on Entrepreneurship, Wealth and Philanthropy (REWP). He holds a PhD in International Business from the University of Bristol. He is author of numerous books and articles in the fields of strategy, leadership and management. His research focuses upon the historical processes that inform contemporary business practice, entrepreneurial philanthropy, and the exercise of power by elite groups in society. His recent publications are in the *Academy of Management Review*, *Organization Studies*, *Organization*, *Human Relations*, and the *Business History Review*.

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Pierre Bourdieu and Elites: Making the Hidden Visible

‘[T]here exists a correspondence between social structures and mental structures, between the objective divisions of the social world – especially the division into dominant and dominated in the different fields – and the principles of vision and division that agents apply to them’.

(Pierre Bourdieu, 1996a: 1)

Abstract

One of Pierre Bourdieu’s great skills and gifts to organizational researchers is his ability to reveal and make manifest the hidden mechanisms of social stratification that often remain invisible in organizational and social life. In this chapter, we explore Bourdieu’s contribution to the study of elites, power and domination. We apply his ideas and concepts illustratively to four specific areas of research: class domination and cultural reproduction in big business; the importance of reflexivity for social mobility; the transactional nature and legitimizing function of entrepreneurial philanthropy and the discerning processes of taste formation, indicative of underlying status distinctions, serving as another means of exercising power. The conceptual arsenal provided by Bourdieu is far from exhausted by management and organization studies. We need it most of all to continue exploring the activities of elites in the global field of power as, largely unobserved, they tighten their stranglehold on global wealth and resources.

Keywords: Bourdieu, domination, elites, inequality, power, social mobility

Chapter objectives

This chapter applies the work of the French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu to the study of elites, power and domination, highlighting his ability to reveal and make manifest the hidden mechanisms of social stratification that often remain invisible in organizational and social life.

The chapter discusses how:

- Bourdieu’s sociological imagination helps to identify the enduring processes of class domination and cultural reproduction in big business.
- Cultivating reflexive practice might influence life chances.
- Some elites may turn to charitable giving and philanthropy for legitimizing purposes.

- Material goods provide the ‘props’ and accoutrements for elites that conceal the arbitrary nature of elite power and make it appear as if preordained.
- A new neoliberal discourse creates a social space within which wealthy elites can position their selves, necessitating the continued exploration of their activities in the global field of power.

Introduction

One of Bourdieu’s greatest skills and gifts to organizational researchers is his ability to reveal and make manifest the hidden mechanisms of social stratification that often remain invisible in organizational and social life. This chapter draws on a body of research, conceptual and empirical, on Bourdieu and elites conducted by the authors over twenty years, particularly in the context of France and the UK but also more broadly. In what follows, we explore Bourdieu’s contribution to the study of elites, which has emerged as an important theme in organization studies in recent years (Reed, 2012). We do so with regard to four research domains: class domination and cultural reproduction in big business; the importance of reflexivity for social mobility; the transactional nature and legitimizing function of entrepreneurial philanthropy, and the discerning processes of taste formation, including transmission, legitimization and embedding. Prior to this, we consider Bourdieu’s *oeuvre* in relation to his background and personal experience.

The writings of Bourdieu are marked by a tendency to perceive binary oppositions in all aspects and strata of social life, which are conceived of as populated by dominant or subordinated agents. Oppositions such as noble/common, inheritors/parvenus and Parisian/provincial, operate as underlying cognitive structures. The initial act of cognition, however, is essentially recognition of an order that exists also in the mind (Bourdieu, 1986a: 172), an order whose being there is projected on to the world perceived, sometimes as a form of *mis*-recognition. Nobility exists, for example, for and by those nobles or commoners who

perceive and recognize it, due to their situatedness in a world organized according to such structuring principles (Bourdieu, 1999).

For Bourdieu, all symbolic systems – whether cultural or linguistic – are sources of domination, helping to fix and preserve social hierarchies. Bourdieu, much as Foucault, considers power to be exercised from innumerable points, being inherent in other types of relationship, such as economic processes. According to this view, power comes not only from above but is also supported from below, so that power depends on those who bear its effects, on rulers and ruled in equal measure (Bourdieu, 1996a; 1999; Foucault, 1978). The ultimate source of power in society derives from the possession of four types of capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) (Bourdieu, 1986b; Harvey & Maclean, 2008). The power that these afford, however, is not stable and static; capital formation is an on-going, dynamic process, subject to accumulation or attrition. As in a game of cards, the hand which players are dealt must still be played, with greater or lesser skill. Agents' positioning in social space is contingent upon their 'overall volume and relative composition of capital' (Anheier, Gerhards & Romo, 1995: 892). Material and symbolic power are intertwined, making it difficult for social agents, as practical strategists, to transcend their situational understanding of the world intellectually, rooted as it is in 'habitus', a structured and structuring principle given and reproduced in daily interaction and the means whereby life chances are 'internalized and converted into a disposition' (Bourdieu, 1986a: 170; Hartmann, 2000; Mutch, 2003). The relationally embedded nature of power, however, causes it to be misunderstood or 'misrecognized' by those held in its sway. This applies especially to symbolic power, as Bourdieu (1991: 163-4) explains:

Without turning power into a 'circle whose centre is everywhere and nowhere', which could be to dissolve it in yet another way, we have to be able to discover it in places where it is least visible, where it is most completely misrecognized – and thus, in fact, recognized. For symbolic power is that invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it.

Bourdieu's personal history and subjective experience

Bourdieu arguably is well qualified to speak for both dominant and dominated categories, having experienced the 'habitus' or 'life world' of both in his career, as a 'sociologist whose origins are in what is called the people and who has reached what is called the elite' (Bourdieu, 1990a: 178). From provincial, lower-middle-class social origins, he ascended to the apex of the academic pyramid (Maclean, Harvey & Press, 2006). Born in 1930 in the Béarn region of southwestern France, the son of a farmer turned postman, Bourdieu proved to be an industrious, able pupil, eventually entering the prestigious Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) in Paris. This, the most academic of the Parisian *grandes écoles*, had a policy of opening its doors to a small number of academically gifted recruits (including Georges Pompidou, who overcame his peasant origins to become president of France). The ENS has served over the years as a breeding ground for French intellectuals, featuring, as former students, Althusser, Bergson, Deleuze, Derrida, Durkheim, Foucault, Lévi-Strauss and Sartre. Here, however, lacking the social and cultural capital of his peers, Bourdieu was made to feel an outsider. Set apart by his provincial origins, denied the 'unselfconscious belonging of those born to wealth, cultural pedigree and elite accents', he saw himself as a frustrated 'oblate' (Swartz, 1997: 18). The experience of alienation instilled in him a desire for revenge against the institutions to which he owed his success, angered by the gulf between their professed ideals and perceived ingrained prejudice against the lower classes (Bourdieu, 1996a). He criticized their role as institutions of social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1970; 1979); indeed, it was as a 'crisis of reproduction' that he viewed the events of May 1968 (Bourdieu, 1984). He objected to the university mandarins who determined the curriculum and engaged in little empirical research while acting as gatekeepers to aspiring academics by controlling access to the higher echelons of academe (Swartz, 1997).

After graduation in 1951, Bourdieu taught in a *lycée* outside Paris, and in 1955, he was sent to do military service in Algeria. Here, finding that the agrarian society of Kabylia had much in common with the peasant community of Béarn, he commenced social scientific research as a self-taught ethnographer, an experience which later influenced his thinking on issues of social domination (Bourdieu, 1962; 1979). Opposed to the French war in Algeria, he left and took up sociology, which at the time enjoyed little prestige and academic recognition in French universities. However, this also presented Bourdieu with the freedom to elaborate his own theories and research methods. He established his own academic *avant-garde*, creating a school, a Centre for European Sociology and, in 1975, a journal to promote his own brand of sociology, the *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, theoretical yet empirically researched. In 1981, his academic achievements were crowned by his election to the Chair of Sociology at the Collège de France, joining the ranks of Raymond Aron and Claude Lévi-Strauss. In the 1990s, having established his position at the pinnacle of French intellectual life, his international renown spread, facilitated by the translation into English of a growing number of his major works, and by regular visits to the US, Japan and other European countries. He was extraordinarily prolific during his career, publishing over 30 books and 350 articles by the time of his death at the age of 71 in January 2002. His body is interred in the prestigious Père Lachaise Cemetery in northeast Paris, alongside writers Marcel Proust and Oscar Wilde, singers Edith Piaf and Jim Morrison, composers Bizet and Chopin, and artists Delacroix and Modigliani – a prodigious achievement for the provincial boy from Béarn. Only the Panthéon confers greater honour.

Bourdieu's dual status as a provincial outsider excluded from the Parisian social elite, an outsider-insider, imbues his writing with an anti-institutional *esprit de critique* (Calhoun & Wacquant, 2002). The Collège de France is a highly prestigious institution but is arguably marginal rather than mainstream. Bourdieu's status as outsider within the academic

community was underscored by the fact that he lacked a *doctorat d'Etat*, the fundamental qualification for a university chair, which meant that his career lacked one essential element of state-conferred legitimacy and personal distinction: he could not, for example, preside over a committee for the *soutenance* (*viva voce*) of a doctoral thesis. Such an absence of an exemplary manifestation of symbolic capital must have stung Bourdieu, for whom the state is the key instigator of symbolic violence in society, partly because of its power to *name*, to confer upon an individual or group 'its social titles of recognition (academic or occupational in particular)' (Bourdieu, 1999: 337). Symbolic violence refers to an unseen means of domination that is exercised symbolically rather than physically, whereby individuals may be treated as inferior or restricted in their personal aspirations. In short, Bourdieu's personal history and subjective experience were crucial to his interpretation of the social processes that order and govern society (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Power, elites and domination

The battle to 'unmask' power and domination demands examining afresh the role of social class. The role of social origin in determining which individuals come to occupy 'strategic command posts' in society is neglected (Mills, 1956: 4; Zald & Lounsbury, 2010), arguably obscured by emphases on gender and ethnicity (Bennett, Savage, Silva et al., 2009). This has enabled the influence of social class to persist largely unseen, shielded from scrutiny in part by a pervasive belief that class is somehow *passé* and obsolete, no longer relevant and hence immaterial (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007). Mike Savage and his collaborators have done much to promote the study of social class in recent years in a British context, identifying new classes, including the precariat at the bottom of the scale (Savage, Cunningham, Devine et al., 2015). However, there is a need also to consider the ongoing role of social class in the acquisition and maintenance of power at the highest levels (Maclean, Harvey & Kling, 2015; 2017). Rising inequalities have attracted renewed interest in scholarly and policy circles in

recent years, especially since the publication of Piketty's (2014) landmark study on the topic, but if one is to grapple with inequalities it is important to engage with the rich and powerful in society. Given the disproportionate exercise of power by a small number of elite players, who function as 'hyper agents' or 'playmakers' in society (Maclean, Harvey & Kling, 2014; Schervish, 2003), there is a corresponding need to investigate further the 'contemporary dynamics of elite production', the processes and structures that lead to enduring inequalities in society (Clegg, Courpasson & Philips, 2006: 357). This entails a re-examination of the social struggles which inform stratification: uncovering the contests for control in fields and the capacities and strategies of agents to optimise their positioning in social space; illuminating settlements and processes of change within what Bourdieu (1996a) termed the 'field of power'. This 'space of power positions' (Bourdieu, 1990s: 127) is the integrative social domain that transcends individual fields and organizations, serving as a metafield of contestation for dominant agents – individuals holding a controlling position within an organizational field – from different walks of life.

Bourdieu (1986a: 476) observes in *Distinction* that:

'every real inquiry into the divisions of the social world has to analyse the interests associated with membership and non-membership... the laying down of boundaries between the classes [being] inspired by the strategic aim of 'counting in' or 'being counted in'.

The problem is that the boundaries of inclusion or exclusion are themselves unseen (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010); social reality being composed of 'an ensemble of invisible relations, those very relations which constitute a space of positions' (Bourdieu, 1989: 16). For Bourdieu (ibid: 23), 'the power to make visible and explicit social divisions that are implicit, is political power par excellence'. The means to impose such divisions becomes objectified as academic qualifications and credentials, for example. In this way, the institutions of consecration play a critical part in funnelling or filtering opportunities for access. Unlike Foucault, who speaks of polymorphous techniques of power, Bourdieu's reflexive sociology is grounded in social

reality, geared to actual social spheres – of elite schools and the state, academia, art, cultural taste and distinction (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986a; 1996a; 1996b). Hence, his world is not only relational; it is also material (Bourdieu, 1998). The objectification of the principles of domination occurs indirectly through the ‘intermediary of mechanisms’, being mediated by material things (Bourdieu, 2011: 137; Le Wita, 1994). The effect of this process of objectification of class-based difference in qualifications, memberships, symbolic and material goods is to obscure the arbitrary nature of their power while simultaneously institutionalizing the principles that inform stratification. In this way, elite reproduction is accomplished by agents in conjunction with specific rules, frameworks and material artefacts that are teleologically charged (Bourdieu, 1990b); dependent on the ‘constitutive entanglement of the social and the material’ that serves to sanction and endorse differences that are socially relevant (Orlikowski, 2007: 1435).

Bourdieu’s ‘master concepts’ of capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic resources), field (social spaces of objective relations between positions) and habitus (internalized dispositions) have attracted much attention in organizational research (Swartz, 2008). His conceptual arsenal – including field theory, capital theory, habitus, reflexivity, class dispositions, doxa, homologues and the field of power – provide a set of constructs and ideas that shed light on elite structures, power and reproduction, illuminating what is really going on beneath ostensible appearances. Important in the context of elites is his notion of ‘doxa’, a set of core discourses which specifies the main principles of a field, and which require submission despite their essentially arbitrary nature. Also fundamental is ‘illusio’, the belief that the game is worth the candle, or as Bourdieu (1998: 76-77) puts it: ‘the fact of being caught up in and by the game, of believing that... playing is worth the effort... and that the stakes created in and through the fact of playing are worth pursuing’. Within this theoretical armoury, however, his concept of the field of power is arguably under-utilized,

despite its considerable conceptual and empirical potential. What he does with these constructs and ideas is to elucidate elite structures, power and reproduction, to help bring the unseen processes and mechanisms that determine (growing) inequalities under the spotlight. We now take four examples of how he achieves this in practice, drawing in turn on the enduring processes of class domination and cultural reproduction in big business; the importance of reflexivity for social mobility; the legitimizing function of entrepreneurial philanthropy, and the discerning processes of taste formation.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

The enduring processes of class domination

Figure 1 displays our conceptualization of the field of power, explicating and developing Bourdieu's (1993; 1996a; 2011) ideas. It depicts institutional life as divided vertically into fields, each defined by the activities conducted within a given social space, delineated by the prevailing rules of competition, practices and dispositions (Hilgers & Mangez, 2015). As individual agents undergo career progression, they may gradually ascend the hierarchy within their selected field; eventually penetrating the field elite should they continue to progress. Progression to the level of field elite affords the potential of accessing the field of power, which a minority of candidates enter while the majority do not. Here, coalitions between elites drawn from different life-worlds form, re-form and reconfigure in response to new challenges and different interests. Bourdieu's (1996a) writing on the field of power refers specifically to the business elite closely intersected with those who serve the state, who form the 'State nobility' (Dudouet & Joly, 2010; Hartmann, 2011). While 'all positions of arrival are not equally probable for all starting points' (Bourdieu, 1986a: 110), the expertise of individual agents in playing the hand they are dealt is critical, helping to determine the outcome of struggles in the field of power – struggles that do not represent a smooth process. Bourdieu elaborates this point in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993: 145-160), where he

populates a fictional field of power with an array of heirs and upstarts drawn from the cast of Flaubert's (1869/1972) novel, *L'Education Sentimentale*. The trump cards the wealthy characters hold are the inherited assets and assimilated attributes of their habitus – 'elegance, ease of manner, beauty and so forth' (Bourdieu, 1993: 150) which define the possibilities intrinsic to the field. However, to prosper the characters must still play the game skilfully.

Figure 1 highlights the extraordinary concentration of power in the hand of a small number of dominant elites in the corporate economy in both France and Britain (Maclean, Harvey & Chia, 2010). Those with the highest levels of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital are found to be especially active within the field of power. Power, as mentioned, is relational, and those most energetic in the field of power tend to bridge different life-worlds, networking both inside and outside the corporate world. Doing so enhances their power base and allows them to form coalitions to pursue changes in public opinion, laws and regulations. Lindsay (2008: 62) calls this a form of 'convening power', which he identifies as one of the most compelling resources at the disposal of elites. A recent illustration of this in the UK is the pressure exerted by some members of the elite in favour of so-called 'light touch' regulation in financial services, whose devastating consequences were exposed when the financial crisis struck in 2007-8.

One question that arises is: in the field of power why is power so concentrated? Why do so few agents enter and remain active in the field of power, the 'dominant dominants'? One of Bourdieu's (1989: 18; 1990a: 131) most important insights is his recognition that 'the structuring structures, the cognitive structures, are themselves socially structured, because they have a social genesis'. Our analysis again highlights the importance of social class, confirming the advantages enjoyed by those from the upper echelons, and highlighting the specific advantage they gain in bridging different life-worlds beyond the corporate sphere. 'Dominant dominants' are, by definition, 'boundary spanners' (Geletkanycz & Hambrick

1997). In Bourdieu's terms, they are 'multipositional', participating in public, private and charitable organizations in cultural, educational, governmental and sporting networks and arenas, engaging with several life-worlds beyond the corporate world (Boltanski, 1973).

Where a high-status background is lacking, 'educational socialization' can help compensate, but not entirely (Reay, Crozier & Clayton, 2009: 1105). While it is undoubtedly beneficial, it is usually in itself insufficient to afford passage to the field of power, since 'the school does not create *ex nihilo* [but]... relies on the family and educational transmission rests on familial transmission' (Wacquant, 1993: 31). This is important, since the occupants of command posts hold positions of power over capital, the exercise of corporate power being heavily implicated in the exercise of economic power. For lower-class aspirants, class serves as a limiting force, inducing a 'capping effect', so that they often achieve second-tier positions, failing to emerge as 'hyper-agents' in their own right. France is described as a meritocracy, but as Hartmann (2000: 243) points out, the espoused societal logic of meritocracy is not the overriding logic when 'the important thing is to know without ever having learnt'. Agents from the uppermost classes, on the contrary, benefit from the reassuring mutual resemblance or in-group bias that makes them attractive to their peers. They recognize one another, seek each other out, and co-opt one another onto the various boards on which they serve (Kling, Harvey & Maclean, 2017; Stern & Westphal, 2010), such that dominant elites choose the schools, the clubs, the boards that have already chosen them (Bourdieu, 2007: 5). This may not be apparent to the outside observer, however, to whom inner sub-divisions of the corporate class may be imperceptible and hence go unnoticed (Flemmen, 2012).

Reflexive practice and social mobility

How, then, might corporate actors from lower-class backgrounds make it to the top, as a small minority of them undeniably do? One answer proposed by Bourdieu and Wacquant

(1992) entails learning to think in a novel way. The conscious adoption of reflexive practices may help to overcome the limitations of familial class habitus, such that ‘the more [agents] become aware of the social within them by reflexively mastering their categories of thought and action, the less likely they are to be actuated by the externality which inhabits them’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 49; Maclean, Harvey & Chia, 2012).

Bourdieu argues that it is only by means of a reflexive stance that agents can objectively make sense of the social world. For Bourdieu (2004: 4), reflexivity has the power to direct an ‘ironic gaze on the social world, a gaze which unveils, unmask, brings to light what is hidden’. Defined as the self-critical contemplation of ‘unthought categories of thought that delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought’, his concept of reflexivity is closely related to his notion of habitus, a system of internalized dispositions that is socially constituted and acquired through experience (Bourdieu, 1990a: 178). Habitus is not a static system but may be interpreted as a ‘grammar of dispositions’ (Vaara and Fay, 2011: 35), which is dynamic and open to re-education, inducing a sense of the potential opportunities for re-positioning available to an individual agent in what Bourdieu (2007: 4) terms the ‘space of possibles’. At key points of disjuncture, dislocation may foster distancing, reappraisal and the development of fresh understanding. Bourdieu experienced such a disjuncture in elite education when ‘being a stranger and a misfit gave [him] a definite distance from the illusions of those professors to whom the “regal vision” of the social world goes without noticing because it is the vision of their class of origin’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 45).

Our analysis suggests a connection between reflexive practice and the potential for career progression, particularly in the case of non-privileged elites. This may be because the greater distance covered in traversing social space facilitates perspective-taking, enhancing multi-positionality. Lacking capital in the ‘economy of exchange’ (Vaara & Fay, 2011: 28), the need of those from non-privileged backgrounds to remake themselves through their own

reconstructive efforts is arguably greater. An uncomfortable awareness of social position can trigger nascent strategies for self-advancement, which may evolve into fine-tuned reflexive practices. In contrast, established elites may be less likely to develop well-honed reflexive practices because, like Bourdieu's professors, their 'regal vision' of their social world is perfectly attuned to their class of origin. Interestingly, new entrants to the corporate elite may be more inclined to take on the mantle of the establishment than seek to change it, thereby playing an active part in ensuring and reinforcing cultural reproduction. Corporate elites are special cases of self-serving communities, where the barriers to entry are social as members serve also as gatekeepers. Hence, assuming the manners, bearing and dispositions of established elite members improves the chances of the non-privileged of admission into prized elite circles.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

Bourdieu's conception of the mediating duality of reflexivity and habitus is modelled in Figure 2. This figure locates individual agents as engaged within fields that exist in a state of flux due to internal dynamics and contingencies. Field dynamics impinge on actors, who in turn engage strategically in pursuit of personal goals. Such engagements between actor and field are mediated through the operation of habitus and reflexivity (Bourdieu, 1993). Habitus, functioning dispositionally, serves as a personal guidance system that helps actors situate themselves within their social milieu. Reflexivity, operating intellectually, enables actors to think critically and formulate appropriate tactics in response to everyday challenges. Figure 2 shows that there are two aspects to reflexivity in the context of social mobility and career progression: these being accumulative and reconstructive. The accumulation of different forms of capital is critical. At the same time, re-constructive reflexivity in response to perspective-taking induces repositioning and recalibration.

The legitimizing function of philanthropy

In conducting research on elites from a Bourdieusian perspective in a context of rising inequalities (Piketty, 2014), one overriding question presents itself which refuses to be suppressed: namely, what do they do with all the money? This question became more insistent as the financial crisis deepened. As Rego, Cunha and Clegg (2012) point out, virtue is exacted of today's elites, whom society expects to engage in business ethically (Piff, Stancato, Côté et al., 2012). Bourdieu's writing casts new light on the practice of philanthropic giving by elites by showing that philanthropy brings accumulative rewards in cultural, social and symbolic capital, which in turn may generate further economic capital (Harvey, Maclean, Gordon & Shaw, 2011). This highlights the hidden benefits agents may derive from nominally noneconomic endeavours, which nevertheless boost their overall capital stock (Swartz, 2008). Philanthropic giving emerges as the product of specific representational strategies, the most profitable of which must appear disinterested, 'on the hither side of all calculation and in the illusion of the most "authentic" sincerity', to succeed (Bourdieu, 1977: 214). Viewed in this light, agents may be seen to have an interest in disinterestedness. This marks a departure from the notion of philanthropy as 'pure gift', born of altruism (Acs & Phillips, 2002; Boulding, 1962; Radley & Kennedy, 1995), to the notion of philanthropic giving as something altogether much more *interested* (Maclean, Harvey, Gordon & Shaw, 2015).

The example of Andrew Carnegie provides a useful illustration of Bourdieu's notion that there is profit to be found in ostensible disinterestedness (Maclean, Harvey & Clegg, 2016). Carnegie (1835-1919) was a Scottish bobbin boy who migrated to the United States, and in due course emerged as a steel magnate (Carnegie, 1920/2006a). His reputation had been severely damaged by his habit of exploiting customers, friends and foes alike, and most dramatically by the 1892 Homestead strike, when he locked out workers and called in the army. His promise to share out most of his fortune during his lifetime, however, singles him

out as a pioneer who reframed expectations for other super-rich business leaders to emulate. In writing *The Gospel of Wealth*, he enabled the relationship between wealthy individuals and their wider communities to be redrawn, strengthening the legitimacy of the former by means of a compact to give back to the latter (Carnegie, 1889-1906/2006b; Harvey, Maclean, Gordon & Shaw, 2011). He altered the meaning of wealth as something that it was permissible to enjoy on condition that it was redistributed during the lifetime of the holder. Bill Gates and Warren Buffet, as entrepreneurial philanthropists have followed his example by taking on his maxim that ‘he who dies rich dies disgraced’; in this sense they are ‘Carnegie’s children’ (Bishop & Green, 2008). Philanthropy proved to be a trump card in Carnegie’s campaign to accumulate symbolic capital. In terms of symbolic association, the scale of his giving set him apart and gave him access to elite actors denied to others. The philanthropic activities of the wealthy enhance their leverage in society in a way that gives them ‘special power’, which may not always be employed for social good (Piff et al., 2010). As Schervish (2005: 267) puts it, ‘the wealthy are well aware of their special power and... most take special steps to be careful about its effects. But such concern provides no guarantee that the effects will be salutary. Hyperagency presents a formidable temptation to manipulation.’

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

Figure 3 makes explicit the relationship between philanthropic engagement and capital accumulation, revealing the various forms of capital as inherently interconnected. Through philanthropy, Carnegie increased his stocks of social and symbolic capital and access to prized networks. This enhanced his ability to achieve personal objectives through the exercise of an increasingly extensive policy-making role in society (Ball, 2008; Villadsen, 2007). In other words, philanthropy facilitates what Bourdieu (1987) calls ‘world-making’, which we might conceive of as the ‘embedded ways in which agents relate to and shape

systems of meaning and mobilize collective action to change social arrangements' (Creed, Scully & Austin, 2002). This illustrates in turn the 'competitive advantage of social orientation' identified by Dees and Anderson (2006: 56), underlying the self-interest which imbues philanthropic engagement (Maclean, Harvey & Gordon, 2013).

Processes of taste formation

In making the hidden visible, Bourdieu's aim is to reveal the social as central to the most subjective experience (Swartz, 2008). His world, as mentioned, is material as well as relational, and within this taste is critical. Taste is presented not as neutral but rather as a form of social orientation: 'Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier' (Bourdieu, 1986a: 6). Tastes, the manifest cultural preferences of individuals, groups and social classes, he argues, cannot be understood independent of class and social hierarchies. There is, he notes, a 'correspondence between goods and groups' as social structures are internalized and embodied as mental structures (Bourdieu, 1986a: 467). Considered thus, taste stems not from internally generated aesthetic preferences but from the conditioning effects of habitus and the availability (or otherwise) of economic and cultural capital, with each class fraction having its own habitus and correlative set of cultural practices. Bourdieu concludes that relative distance from necessity is the primary determinant of habitus and the formation of tastes and preferences, inducing the 'taste of necessity or the taste of luxury' (Bourdieu, 1986a: 175).

Culture and taste are thus central to Bourdieu's understanding of habitus, domination, and the exercise of power by elites, engendering 'a "sense of one's place" which leads one to exclude oneself from the goods, places and so forth from which one is excluded' (ibid: 471). Habitus works by adjusting expectations to life-worlds as well as life chances. Being 'bourgeois' means mastering a whole system of objects and artefacts in addition to words and gestures, which together comprise a defined culture (Le Wita: 1994). In this way, *being* becomes equated with *being perceived* (ibid: 483), and with the consumption of goods, which

function as ‘props’ and accoutrements to a specific lifestyle, concealing the arbitrary nature of elite power and making it seem preordained. Hence, cultural practices and artefacts denote underlying status distinctions, serving as subtle yet powerful forms of social distinction, such that good taste emerges as a means of exercising power in its own right (Turner & Edmunds, 2002: 221).

[Insert Figure 4 about here]

Bourdieu articulates processes of taste formation that otherwise remain nebulous, difficult to circumscribe and pin down. In Figure 4, we present a process model of taste formation that builds on Bourdieu’s analysis as presented in *Distinction* (1986a: 226-256) and *The Rules of Art* (1996b: 141-173). Each of the four processes delineated in Figure 4 involves a series of interactions between the field of production and consumption, referred to by Bourdieu as functional and structural homologues. *Objectification* defines the translation of ideas into artefacts – new products attuned to the *Zeitgeist* of the times. *Legitimization* stems from acceptance on the part of the cultural elite that a new class of goods meets and satisfies prevalent standards of good taste. *Transmission* entails the gradual expansion of a community of taste while preserving status distinctions between consumers. This is realized, we suggest, through the production of ‘lesser emblems of distinction’ (Harvey, Press & Maclean, 2011), ‘copies of copies’ in Deleuze’s (1972: 7) terms, purchased by consumers lacking the economic capital to acquire more original, bespoke, distinctive items. In this way, for example, the catwalk is linked to the high street as sought-after items are reproduced and trickle down in a more accessible format, as lesser emblems of distinction. In the fourth process, *institutionalization*, the cultural elite elevates selected products to classic status, the embodiment of good taste, while consumers cherish them as part of a cultural heritage. It is through the on-going dialogue between the cultural elite and consumers that tastes become embedded.

Concluding thoughts

Bourdieu offers us, through his conceptual arsenal, ways of making visible and bringing out in to the open that which would otherwise remain hidden from view. In this regard he is an exemplar of the French philosophical-sociological tradition. Especially pertinent to this making visible is the study of elites and the ways in which they are changing (or not changing) their strategies and tactics in an increasingly globalized and unequal world. The twenty-first century has seen a progressive rise in inequality (Piketty, 2014; Stiglitz, 2012). In times defined as those of austerity, states no longer choose to meet growing welfare needs, facilitating the emergence of a neo-liberal ‘common sense’ which deems the private sphere more effective than the public in serving the common interest (Davis & Walsh, 2017). This new discourse also creates a social space into which wealthy agents can move and take up position (Ball, 2008; Villadsen, 2007). Engaging with rich and powerful elites may not always be popular in social science research, partly because of academic dispositions (Brewer, 2013), and partly because of the difficulties of gaining access (Pettigrew, 1992). However, there is growing recognition that it is timely now, as the crisis of inequality deepens, to take up the challenge of engaging directly with wealth, power and privilege without losing criticality.

Bourdieu’s theoretical arsenal is far from exhausted in its exploration by students of management and organizations, enabling new avenues of enquiry to be opened up. We need it most of all to continue our explorations of the activities of elites in the global field of power as – unseen and largely unobserved – they tighten their grip or stranglehold on global wealth and resources.

End-of-chapter exercises

1. Why do so few agents enter and remain active in the field of power?

2. In what way might reflexive practice help to compensate for a lower-class background in career progression?
3. Given the strong interest in philanthropic giving, why is society currently experiencing growing inequalities?
4. Drawing on Bourdieu's capital theory, how might philanthropic giving be seen as a strategy of interest available to elites, rather than purely disinterested?
5. How did philanthropic giving enhance Carnegie's ability to realize personal goals, and how does this illustrate Bourdieu's theory of capital accumulation?
6. In what way does taste stem from the conditioning effects of habitus and the availability (or otherwise) of economic and cultural capital, as opposed to being independently generated by individual preferences? Do you agree with Bourdieu's assessment?
7. How might Bourdieu's concept of the field of power help us to understand growing inequalities?

Glossary

Capital: A generalized resource, which may be monetary or non-monetary in form, tangible or intangible, and represents a power over a given field. Its four main types are economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital.

Doxa: A collection of essential discourses and values that together establish the principles of a given field, misrecognized as true despite being fundamentally arbitrary.

Field: Individual competitive arena that constitutes a recognized area of organizational or social life, marked by an on-going struggle for capital.

Field of power: The integrative social domain, transcending individual fields and organizations, that represents a metafield of contestation for dominant agents.

Habitus: An internalized disposition which emerges and is developed in response to the objective conditions that individuals encounter in their development, and which serves as a structured and structuring principle given and reproduced in daily interaction.

Homologies: Similarities between fields that lead dominant actors to share similar dispositions across domains.

Illusio: Recognition of and investment in the game and its stakes.

Misrecognition: Recognition of a taken-for-granted order that exists also in the mind and appears like second nature.

Reflexivity: A systematic, self-critical practice that challenges unthought categories of thought that restrict the thinkable and preset the thought.

Symbolic violence: An invisible mode of domination that is exercised symbolically rather than physically, whereby individuals may be treated as inferior or constrained in their personal aspirations.

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Figure 1: Elite Actors in the Field of Power

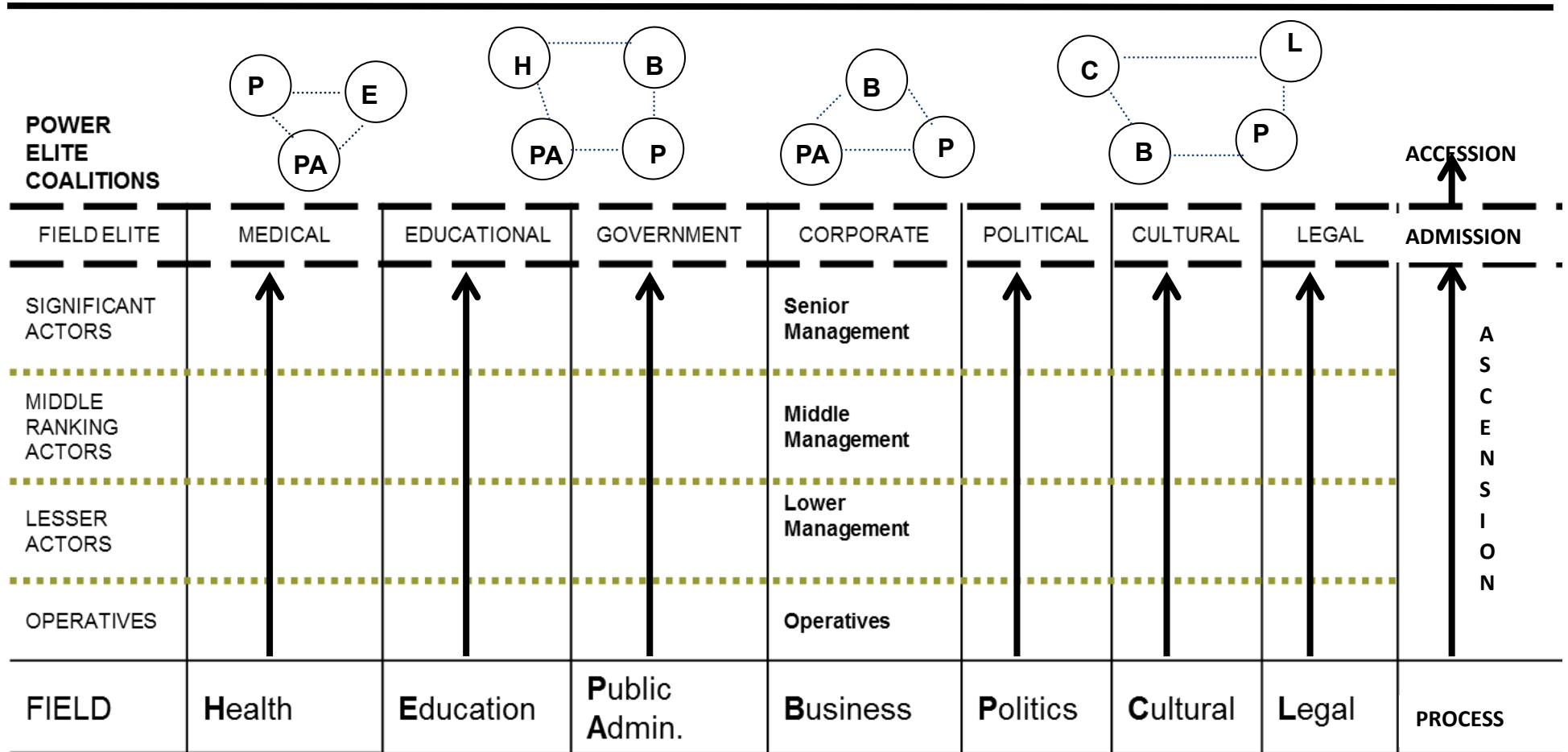


Figure 2: Mediating Role of Reflexivity and Habitus

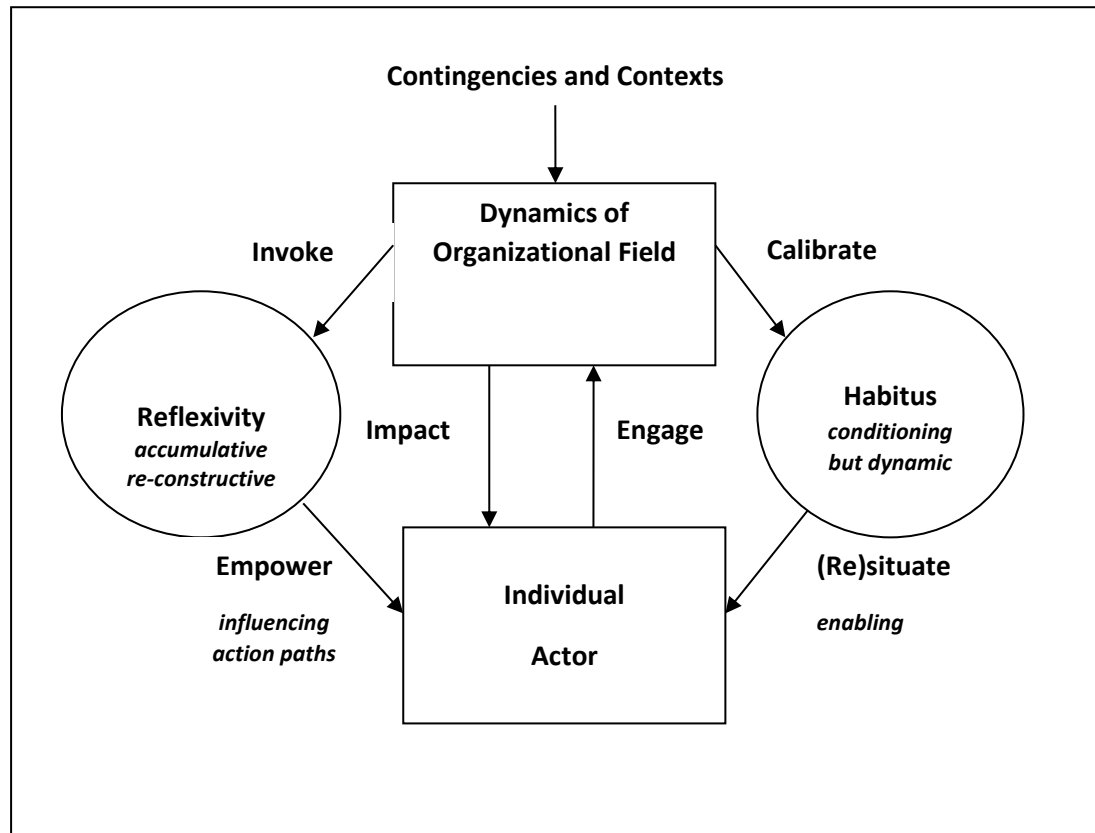


Figure 3: A Capital Theoretic Model of Entrepreneurial Philanthropy

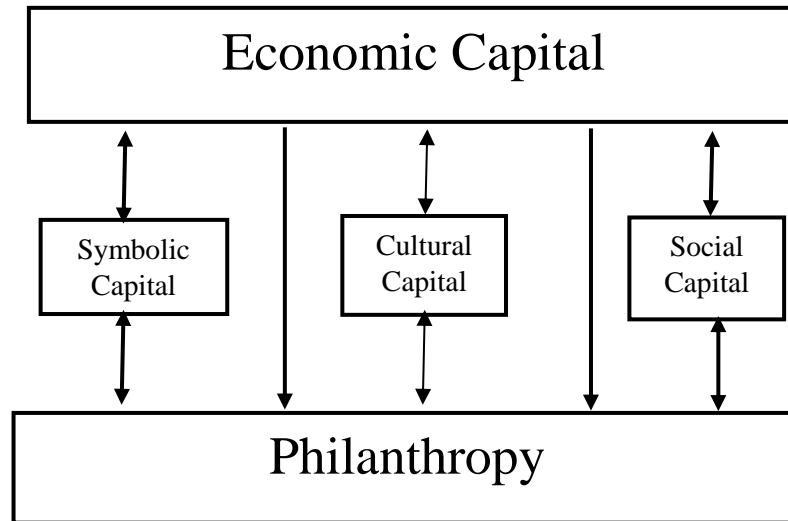


Figure 4: Cultural Homologies and the Four Processes of Taste Formation

PROCESS	CULTURAL HOMOLOGIES		
	<i>Field of Production</i>		<i>Field of Consumption</i>
Objectification	Translation of abstract ideas into cultural artefacts	↔	Formation of cultural dispositions through homologous movements in society
Legitimization	Production, marketing and endorsement of a new genre of cultural products	↔	Establishment through symbolic appropriation of a leading edge community of taste
Transmission	Range of products extended to include lesser emblems of distinction	↔	Community of taste extended across different sections of society
Institutionalization	Original models exploited in the production of sentimentally evocative goods	↔	Community of taste renewed across generations through cultural reproduction